# Customer Service

## Annual Report 2018

**Maryland**
**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**
A Culture of **YES**

Larry Hogan, Governor • Boyd Rutherford, Lt. Governor

# It's About the Culture

Dear Team Commerce,

Providing great customer service is not only essential for any successful business, but should be an important part of the mission for government agencies as well. Here at Commerce, the Customer Service Promise is a way a life, a principle that guides all of our efforts to help Maryland businesses grow and create new jobs.

It's my great pleasure to present you with our second annual report on the department's Customer Service Improvement Plan. Here, you can read all about Team Commerce's ongoing efforts to provide the very best service to our customers, including streamlining some processes in the Office of Finance Programs, providing team members with more resources for training and development as well as guidance for improving their health and wellness, and soliciting feedback from both our customers and the department's internal team.

The governor's statewide Customer Satisfaction Survey found that Commerce had an impressive 92% satisfaction rating, while a business stakeholder survey conducted by the department found that over 75% of respondents praised Maryland's progress in improving its business culture over the past three years.

In the year to come, we're aiming to expand our internal resources for Commerce team members and promote more community engagement and volunteer work through our "Project Starfish" initiative. Stay tuned for more detail as these efforts progress.

Big thanks once again to our Managing Director of Administration and Customer Experience Greg Derwart, who continues to champion the Customer Service Promise at Commerce and across Maryland state agencies, and to everyone at Team Commerce for your efforts to provide our customers with the timely, courteous service they deserve.

Mike

Mike Gill

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# Leadership & Contributors

Mike Gill
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# FY18 Highlights

Team Commerce has evolved into a culture of improved communication, responsiveness and collaboration. Building on the Governor's statewide customer service initiative, communication and response times with our constituents has improved with an overall customer service satisfaction rating of 92%. Not only is Commerce engaged statewide, internally we're making improvements to the benefit of our customers leading to an enhanced customer experience.

The Commerce Subcabinet, comprised of the most external business-focused state agencies and departments has proven a success leading to more responsive and expeditious service. Workgroups were active focusing on Customer Service, Workforce Development and Job Creators tracking more than 110 projects, programs and initiatives of significant business impact to local jurisdictions.





Effective and streamlined business climate is a priority focus. Both internal and external, improved processes were implemented. Engaging with elected officials, academia partners, for-and non-profit agencies, and the federal government, Commerce sought to identify programs and initiatives to provide clarity of state agency roles and improve customer service, all supporting economic vitality and growth.

# Recognition Given to Team Members

Commerce has continued with two formal recognition programs, presented regularly at our "First Mondays" bi-monthly all-team meetings.

**Team Member of the Month** – nominations are solicited by leadership, and Secretary Gill publicly acknowledges the team member who has gone above and beyond the call of duty for a customer or special project.



Sept. 2017      Connie Page

Jan. 2018      Saundra Jones

**"Pirate" of the Month** – nominations are solicited by leadership, and Secretary Gill presents a Secretary's Citation and publicly acknowledges the team member who has exhibited characteristics such as creativity, ingenuity and innovation, and an entrepreneurial, non-bureaucratic attitude!



| | |
|---|---|
| Sept. 2017 | Casey Keyfauver |
| Nov. 2017 | Bret Schreiber, Joel McCrea |
| Jan. 2018 | Jennifer White, Pamela Dunne |
| March 2018 | Stacey Kubofcik, Chris Paez |
| June 2018 | Alicea Cragwell, Dana McCann, Margie Long |

# Leadership Analysis of FY18

Commerce's customer service improvement plan continues to be driven by its 2016 "Best is the Standard" strategic plan. Specifically, goal #1 of the plan speaks to achieving operational excellence through customer service and process improvements. The overarching theme of this goal centers on a dynamic and thriving culture both internally with our team and externally with our business customers.

Each year, strategies are created for the following categories:

- Process improvement
- Onboarding & training
- Performance measures

The following pages provide an update on our successes from FY18, and our plans for FY19.

Overall we know that our efforts are making a difference. A business stakeholder survey we conducted in early 2018 showed that a majority of respondents are not only satisfied with their recent experiences with Commerce, but that their experiences have improved over the past three years.

Additionally, over 75% said that our efforts in creating a customer focused culture have been better over the past three years. Details can be seen later in this report.

# Detailed FY18 Results & FY19 Plans

**Process Improvement**

- Led and implemented the Governor's statewide Customer Service Initiative with the support of the Customer Service Workgroup. Commerce:

    - Facilitated and executed a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a master contract with 19 customer service training and process improvement consultants, available to all state agencies and Maryland counties and municipalities.

    - Executed the Governor's statewide Customer Service Heroes Program acknowledging individual achievements.

- Created a new Commerce Management Team, compiled of director-level supervisors, in support of improved communication and collaboration. From the ranks of this Management Team, a new leadership development and special projects program was created entitled Management Boards. Boards will facilitate a six month special project to improve culture and support strategic plan goals.

- Created "Commerce Strength," a new health and wellness program for team members that encourages collaboration and "getting out from behind our desks."

- Led the Commerce Subcabinet resulting in improved interagency coordination.

    - The seven agency Subcabinet comprised of Commerce, and the Departments of Environment (MDE), Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Planning (MDP), Transportation (MDOT), Labor, Licensing and Regulation (DLLR) and the Governor's Office of Small, Minority, and Women Business Affairs (GOSBA) meet alternating months.  Also engaged are the State Department of Assessments and Taxation (SDAT) and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC).

    - Subcabinet interagency approach has led to expedited issue resolution, better understanding of challenges and opportunities, sharing of best practices, and mutual priorities.

    - Work of the three Workgroups - Customer Service, Workforce, and Job Creators led to exploration into alternative methods to improve transparency, process improvement and enhanced customer experience.

- Office of Finance Programs implemented several internal and external process improvements to simplify and enhance the customer's experience.

- New internal training program was developed to strengthen knowledge and collaboration within the business development team for improved prospect identification and program delivery.

- The proposal letter format was improved to be more concise, user friendly and enhance the customer experience.

- In collaboration with the Administration and Technology team, implemented an electronic portal to accept applications for the Research and Development (R&D) Tax Credit. This application will serve as a model driving gains in efficiency and customer service.

- Teaming with SDAT, delivered training to local Enterprise Zone Administrators to enhance understanding of the application and approval process for an improved customer experience.

- A partnership with the Maryland Department of Veterans Affairs resulted in improved application processing for the Military Personnel and Veteran-owned Small Business Loan Program (MPVSBLP).

- Maryland State Arts Council created a new internal online process for analyzing and processing grant reports leading to expeditious payments for all customers.

- Supporting the Advisory Council on the Impact of Regulation on Small Business, Commerce assisted in the development of guidelines and accompanying list of trade organizations to improve the operations of state government and associated training.

**Onboarding and Training**

- Expanded Commerce University, encouraged utilization, added online content, and scheduled in-person presentations.

- TED Talk "Think Tank" sessions were held to discuss various aspects of collaboration and leadership skills.

- Held quarterly onboarding training to familiarize new team members with Commerce culture, resources and department functions.

- Developed, implemented and trained Regional Development Team with a new Outreach Visit method to enhance and enrich the customer experience.

**Performance Measures**

- Availed the Baltimore Business Journal's "Best Place to Work" program to solicit input on team member satisfaction and engagement.

- Surveyed and received input on internal team satisfaction of administration services.

- Surveyed customers of the Video Lottery Terminal (VLT) loan program. Eighty-eight percent of customers reported that they were very satisfied or satisfied with their VLT Loan Manager and the primary reason cited was the detailed level of support that went beyond the loan.

**Moving Forward in 2019**

Efforts for FY19 include the following strategies:

- Continue to expand new team member onboarding with a 12 month "Commerce Academy" program.

- Create a mentor program, pairing new team members with veterans for a six month mentor relationship.

- Continue to develop our volunteer community engagement program dubbed "Project Starfish".

Project
Starfish

# Voice of the Customer – Survey Results

In addition to utilizing the Governor's statewide Customer Satisfaction Survey, where Commerce again had impressive results with a 92% satisfaction rating, we also conducted a business stakeholder survey in January and February of 2018. We solicited feedback from hundreds of businesses across all regions and jurisdictions, as well as members of the Maryland Chamber of Commerce and the Maryland Economic Development Association. Highlights include:

- 60% say experiences have improved over the past three years

- 76% say Maryland's progress in creating a customer focused culture for businesses has been "better" over the past three years

- 85% have seen/heard the Open for Business campaign

Customers also said:

"I think that Governor Hogan is doing a great job promoting a business friendly Maryland and Secretary Gill and his team are executing the plan and promoting the message through actions. Great work!" – *John Shetrone, Vision Tech*

"I find Mike Gill and team exceptionally accessible and focused on building win-win business relationships in the state. We (SBD) do business in 189 countries, and nowhere in the world have we a better working relationship than with Mike, Brady and team." – *Jeff Ansell, Stanley Black & Decker*

# Customer Service Training

Our 100% annual participation rate is achieved by providing a variety of trainings throughout the year through multiple sources, including:

- Web-based video training housed on our Commerce University site.

- Guest speakers at "First Mondays" bi-monthly all-team meetings.

- Prioritizing customer service and teamwork within our team member performance and goal setting reviews.

# Timeliness & Responsiveness

Commerce is often providing solutions for its customers that include outreach, research, thoughtful analysis and negotiation that can intentionally take weeks or months to complete. So rather than the speed of retail-minded transactions, our cultural improvements center around anticipative solutions.

Having said that, the Governor's online customer satisfaction survey tracked customer satisfaction for timeliness and responsiveness from July to December 2017, and Commerce had a 95% satisfaction rating.

# Social Media & Online Experience

Our new "Open for Business" website launched on February 7. Between the launch and the end of the fiscal year, **227,316 users** visited open.maryland.gov. The website was designed to not only tell the Maryland story, but to also help connect users to key information more easily. To do this, the team created a new resources section that serves as a gateway to connect users to information related to starting or growing a business in Maryland.  New mechanisms for contacting the department were also implemented within the website. Instead of a 1-800 number being the only way to reach Commerce, web users were directed to the appropriate regional or business development representatives, or could fill out a form to receive a response.  As a result, users made the following outreach:

- 163 outreaches via the "Contact Us" form

- 48 emails sent directly to Commerce representatives

- 137 calls directly to Commerce representatives

- 133 newsletter signups